

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

**November 30, 2006
1:30 p.m., MST**

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Room 1 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman
Mr. John Baracy
Mr. Jim DiCello
Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan
Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Eileen Klein
Ms. Karen Merritt
Ms. Anna Rosas

Absent:

Dr. Eugene Garcia

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Approval of September 28, 2006, October 2, 2006, and October 11, 2006 minutes of Task Force Meetings

Mr. Alan Maguire called for the approval of the September 28, 2006, October 2, 2006, and October 11, 2006 minutes. The motion was made by Mr. Jim DiCello and was seconded by Ms. Anna Rosas. The minutes listed above were unanimously approved by the Task Force.

3. Presentations and discussion of Structured English Immersion

Dr. Rosalie Pedalino Porter, Education Specialist with the Institute for Research in English Acquisition Development, presented her findings regarding Structured English Immersion. Dr. Porter worked for five years as a bilingual teacher and was an English Language Learner before the implementation of programs to teach immigrant children the language. She also worked for ten years as an education specialist in a program that had over thirty languages spoken by

students. During her career in bilingual education, she noticed some serious fallbacks in the method. She found that Massachusetts' change to SEI, with an intensive approach, taught children English faster. Dr. Porter stated that children can learn with intensive instruction and that it is the duty of the state to provide the resources. Furthermore, children should not be segregated the entire day, but should interact with other English speaking students. Dr. Porter added that it is important to remember children learn at different rates.

Dr. Porter cited her article published in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, entitled "The Newton Alternative to Bilingual Education." (Attachment A). When the Massachusetts law was put into effect, the assistant superintendent of the Brookline, Massachusetts public school requested that the state law be revised to "give . . . an intelligent skeleton, and let each district flesh it out according to its own community's needs."

Dr. Porter stated that the best learning circumstances are with instruction beginning in pre-school in a high context environment. In one such program, after 6-8 weeks of instruction, Dr. Porter observed ELL students speaking and understanding rudimentary English.

Dr. Porter stated that a good ELL program begins with well-trained staff. She recommended providing training for all administrative staff, including counselors, principals, and content area teachers. Dr. Porter also said that it is important to make non-English speaking parents feel like a part of the process by encouraging these parents to read to their children in their own language.

The second presenter was Mr. Kevin J. Clark, Senior Consultant with Clark Consulting and Training Inc. Mr. Clark has a background in teaching and has worked with many school districts in implementing SEI programs. He began his remarks by reminding people that the law that is mandating these changes involves humans, who can complicate things. It is the mission of the Task Force to help districts and schools move towards compliance. Mr. Clark supports the law that mandates four hours of English Language Development for students. He stated that educators may have many assumptions that must be addressed as the state changes its ELL program. Common assumptions are: it takes a long time to learn a second language; students can only learn when they are ready; if students do not have elementary level literacy in their primary language, they will never be literate in a second language; and only young children can learn English.

He presented a diagram to show how an ELL immersion program could work. The rows indicated the Incidence Percentage (or # of ELLs), from low to high. The columns indicated types of student groupings that would work for each row, staff allocation required, and time allocation. Mr. Clark stated that school districts need to have a clear definition of "structured" in order to avoid renaming what is already in place to meet compliance. Mr. Clark posed the following questions: What does it mean to teach English? What would be the components of this?

Mr. Clark listed important elements of teaching English, including a native "sound system" (phonemic awareness), syntax (conventions in the Arizona standards), verb tenses, and vocabulary. He presented a diagram that illustrated a breakout of four hours of English

Language Development. The four hours included twenty minutes of pronunciation, thirty minutes of word order, thirty minutes of verb tenses, fifty minutes of vocabulary, as much as ninety minutes of reading, and sixty minutes of writing.

The final Structured English Immersion presenter was Dr. Ken Noonan, Superintendent of California Oceanside Unified School District, a district that started using immersion eight years ago when California law mandated it. Before becoming a USD superintendent, Dr. Noonan taught middle school and high school and was a bilingual teacher who supported bilingual education until his experiences with SEI changed his mind. At the time the district adopted an SEI program he expected they would return to bilingual programs. However, this did not happen. The ELL students did well in SEI classes; the district scores went from the thirteenth percentile in the state to the twenty-third percentile in one year, a growth of 100%. The next year the district advanced to the thirty-third percentile and has moved steadily up since, though not as dramatically.

California law requires two hours of English Language Development. Oceanside District was visited by the Office of Civil Rights, which worked to make sure there was no segregation. Since its beginning, the district's ELL program has grown and succeeded, making Dr. Noonan a believer that SEI is the best way for children to learn English. He shared an article in which he expressed this opinion, "I Believed That Bilingual Education Was Best . . . Until the Kids Proved Me Wrong." (Attachment B.) Dr. Noonan stated that it is most important to have a solid structure and guidance for teachers and administration. He concluded his remarks and left the Oceanside ELL program model for the ELL Task Force to review. (Attachment C.)

At the end of the three SEI presentations, members of the ELL Task Force asked questions of the panel members. Ms. Johanna Haver asked Dr. Porter how the models should deal with early grade segregated ELL classrooms. Dr. Porter responded that what is already taught in Kindergarten is English Language Development -- nursery rhymes, talking, drawing pictures in response to stories, and math readiness.

Mr. Jim DiCello asked if the California law advocated additional funding for the SEI ELL program. Dr. Noonan replied that no additional state funding had been supplied, and that the district used Title I funding to train their teachers. Ms. Eileen Klein asked how funding was reallocated and how organizational structures were changed for the program. Dr. Noonan replied that there was another law that required K-3 classes to be twenty students to one teacher, so lower grades class size was modified to comply with the law. The district did not change middle school or high school class sizes. Ms. Haver asked what the funding formula is for Massachusetts. Dr. Porter said that the state provides funding according to the tax base, so poorer districts receive more funding. There is also a small fund for ELL programs. Ms. Anna Rosas asked if there is a state assessment in California or if assessments were handled by individual districts. Dr. Noonan replied there is a universal state assessment for ELLs. Dr. Porter said that Massachusetts also has a standardized assessment and that data is now being reported, which allows districts to modify their programs. She added that in just the first two years of the SEI program, a good percentage of ELL students were making advanced status in

proficiency, and in the second year, 40% had progressed to advanced proficiency. Before the SEI program, typically only about 5% reclassified each year.

Mr. Alan Maguire asked what districts should do beyond what is being done in the classroom for a successful ELL program. Mr. Clark replied that teacher and administrator training is important, and that parental involvement is also important. Dr. Porter added that one school with a high Hispanic ELL population involved the parents and enlisted the aid of community leaders to advise teachers. The results were a steady increase in student progress. In addition, the district set up a part-time work program at the high school, targeting students in danger of dropping out. Of sixteen students identified as in danger of dropping out, twelve were retained in school with the work program. Other programs that were successful included a summer school ESL program with an arts camp where the district also invited ELL students who were new to the district. Dr. Noonan said that as a result of California's Proposition 227, all teachers became SEI teachers, since they all had to deal with ELL students, whether students were in the ELL program or reclassified. Teachers all receive the same training, which is critical to the success of the program. The district pays for this training.

Mr. John Baracy asked about the most recent 2nd grade gains, and if Dr. Noonan could get 2005-2006 numbers. Dr. Noonan replied that the advancement was not as dramatic as the first two years of the program, but is still increasing. He said he would get that information for the Task Force. Mr. Baracy then asked in addition to SEI and class sizes, what Oceanside District did in order to succeed. Dr. Noonan replied that they created a structured plan, holding principals accountable and training them how to monitor. The schools use Wednesday afternoons as staff development days with early release for the students. In the summer, staff can pick from a menu of courses, including a two week class that includes SEI strategies. Mr. Baracy asked the approximate cost per child. Dr. Noonan replied about \$6000 per student, which the state provides, then the district uses Title I or additional funding. Mr. Baracy requested the projected cost per child for the ELL program. Mr. DiCello asked about the length of the school year. Dr. Noonan replied it is 180 days of instruction.

Ms. Haver asked what can be done to change the emphasis at universities from bilingual to SEI instruction. Mr. Clark replied that the law change will start to change the ideology. Dr. Porter added that she has had students learning bilingual teaching strategies at the universities who have never read about SEI and that only a small group of educators are writing about SEI practices. The only way to change this is to keep writing, and keep working on it. She included a list of publications in one of her handouts, "The Benefits of English Immersion." (Attachment D.) Dr. Noonan said that he has had problems with universities; for a time no student teachers were sent to Oceanside USD because of their SEI program. He protested and threatened to go public with the information, and the universities capitulated. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan stated that the law mandates full SEI endorsements for new teachers. She asked advice on making sure the universities are teaching the curriculum and not politicizing it. Dr. Porter answered that the direct approach to the board of directors and president is best. Mr. Clark said it would be best to make an operational model of a good ELL teacher. Ms. Garcia Dugan suggested videotaping

teachers for certification and having ADE evaluate them to be sure they fit the model. Mr. Clark suggested a complaint to the education commissioner if teachers don't fit the model.

Ms. Klein asked Mr. Clark to elaborate on the grouping structures mentioned in his diagram. Mr. Clark explained grouping will be created by the number of ELL students at a school, which is determined through assessment. In a school with a high ELL population there could be different ELL classrooms for different proficiencies such as basic or intermediate. In a school with a very low ELL population, however, the grouping might have to be by grade, or even multi-grade. Thus, a third grade class of seven, for example, should be grouped with the six ELL students in fourth grade to make up one ELL classroom. Students could be placed in a pullout system for English language instruction and in a mainstream classroom the rest of the day for other content areas. Dr. Porter added that she had included in her handouts a list of articles on research of successful programs.

4. The impact of Reading First on English Language Learners

Ms. Kathryn Hrabluk, Deputy Associate Superintendent for K-12 Literacy Section, Division of School Effectiveness, ADE, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Arizona's involvement with the Reading First grant over the last three years. (PowerPoint presentation Attachment E.) The last three years were Cycle One; the program is now moving into Cycle Two, involving 146 participating schools across the state.

The first component of the program is professional development. Teachers are trained for two to four days in summer with additional training in the school year. All progress is monitored and decisions are data driven. There is a strong accountability for progress. Students are assessed three times a year. Reading First is a systematic instruction with a ninety minute reading block and five components from the Arizona Academic Standards: Phonemic Awareness and Decoding, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. The Reading First focus is to teach children to read independently and to deepen cognitive strategies in analyzing text.

The keys to effective vocabulary instruction include direct, explicit, and intentional instruction; repetition and multiple exposures, keeping students actively engaged in the learning process; and incidental vocabulary learning, such as reading aloud or having discussions. The components of a Reading First program include establishing a strong leadership, conducting regular assessments, systematic instruction, district support, intervention activities, professional development, communication and collaboration, a reading rich environment, and a reading coach to assist teachers.

In the past three years of the program, participating schools have seen significant results. Reading First targets schools with either low test scores or high poverty. In Cycle One, 72 schools participated. At the start of the first year, only 9% of the Kindergarteners were reading at grade level. By the end of the year, 53% percent were reading at grade level. At the end of the second year of the program, 76% percent of Kindergarteners read at grade level, and by the end of the third year, 86% percent were reading at grade level. The second and third grade rises

were not as steep, but still showed a steady increase. About 41% of the first graders at the end of the first year of the program were reading at grade level; this percent rose to 64% by the end of the third year. Thirty-two percent of the second graders read at grade level at the end of the second year of the program, and 54% of the second graders read at grade level by the end of the third year. For students who need intensive help, the program also includes a sixty-minute intervention to help close the gap.

Reading First also conducts subtests, including the Phonemic Segmentation, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency. The first two subtests assess phonemic decoding and the third subtest requires student comprehension of text for a smooth natural flow. ELL students tend to have similar scores as mainstream students in the first two tests, but have a slight lag in the Oral Reading Fluency. The task is for teachers to narrow that gap.

Ms. Hrabluk stated that Nogales Unified School District has done an excellent job despite the challenges of having an ELL population of about 70%. The district has four Reading First schools and has outperformed the state's average test scores of other Reading First schools in every grade every year of the program. For the 2005-2006 school year, 75% of students in the state met or exceeded a passing score on the AIMS reading exam. In Nogales Unified School District, 70% of students met or exceeded, and one of Nogales school's test scores were higher than the state average, with 76% of students meeting or exceeding a passing score.

Ms. Karen Merritt asked if the Reading First was only a three year program. Ms. Hrabluk replied that there was a decision to revisit the closed three year program to provide some lesser funding for Cycle One schools as well as adding new schools for the second cycle of the program. Ms. Merritt commented that it was interesting that the program used ninety minutes for reading instruction, similar to Mr. Clark's model. Ms. Hrabluk added that many districts were now using the Reading First strategies system-wide, K through 12, adopting assessment systems, monitoring systems, and exposing all students to grade level content during the day.

Mr. Maguire asked if the charts shown were tracking the same students from Kindergarten in year one to first grade in year two and so on. Ms. Hrabluk replied that not all the students were the same, since some left the school and new students enrolled. In cases of district-wide programming, mobility within the district can be addressed and the students monitored. Reading First contributes a site-based coach and about \$200,000 per district or LEA in funding over three years. After three years, the district can opt to continue the site-based coach, a half-time interventionist, and limited professional development funding. Mr. Maguire asked if much of the funding went to the initial set up of the program for implementation and that once implemented, if it became more maintenance of the program. Ms. Hrabluk agreed in Cycle two there are now 52 districts involved.

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan asked if Reading First offered professional development to all schools. Ms. Hrabluk replied that yes, all K-3 teachers in the state may take the professional development. Ms. Anna Rosas asked if that was all on the website, and if additional schools in the participating districts would be added next year. Ms. Hrabluk replied that yes, the courses

are on the website, but that decisions had not yet been made to add any additional schools. That decision will likely come in January since the federal funding remains static. Ms. Johanna Haver asked what estimated percentage of students in Reading First were ELL. Ms. Hrabluk replied that all students in participating schools were in the program, but she did not have the data of the percentage overall.

5. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made the call to the public at 4:22pm. There were no public statements.

6. Requests for future agenda items and discussion of future meetings

Mr. Alan Maguire stated that the next meeting would be held on December 14, 2006 in Tucson during the PELL IDEAL Conference. Another meeting was tentatively scheduled for December 18th to review data from the matrix and look at building models. Ms. Eileen Klein asked to hear from finance experts to help determine cost effectiveness. Mr. Maguire stated that Mr. Jim DiCello could assist with this. Ms. Karen Merritt asked that there be a presentation on the ADE compensatory forms which are being developed.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Jim DiCello moved for the meeting to be adjourned; the motion was seconded by Ms. Eileen Klein. The meeting adjourned at 4:26pm.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman
January 25, 2007